

# No stone unturned in search for rock history

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PLYMOUTH - Town clerk Laurence Pizer is at heart, first and foremost, an historian. And the first question that came to his mind when he arrived in Plymouth 20 years ago as the director of the Pilgrim Society was "Is that really Plymouth Rock? Did the Pilgrims really step on that rock?"

That puzzlement has taken him on an historian's quest to find an answer. "It is, after all," he said with a grin from behind his town hall desk, "a key town clerk question." After 20 years of research, this is what he has discovered.

In the early 1740s the town of Plymouth decided to build a pier at a particularly good spot along the waterfront. Upon hearing of this news, a gentleman in his 90s asked his sons to collect him from his home in Manomet and bring him to the proposed site on Water Street. The elderly man told the workers, "Don't you cover that up. That's the rock the Pilgrims landed on."

The gentleman was known as Elder Faunce, presumably the presiding elder of the local church and a man of some status, according to Pizer. At 90 or more, Faunce must have been born in the 1650s, adding weight to his claim that he had personally known folks that had arrived in America on the **Mayflower**, or "the ship" as it was referred to then. But Pizer struggled with Faunce's credibility until he became town clerk in 1992 and began reading the town's records. He discovered that he and Faunce had more in common than just an interest in the rock. Pizer found that Faunce had also served as Plymouth's town clerk for 40 years starting in the late 1600s. He was a historian, Pizer said, a person who took accuracy very seriously.

"And we know," Pizer said with a twinkle in his eye, "if a town clerk says something, it's got to be true."